

Fitness as Foreplay

Hitting the gym before you hit the sack shapes you up for the best sex

By Carly Baillie Krug

Pleasure Principle

The fitness motto “No pain, no gain” has no place in the bedroom. Getting it on should only be about feeling good, and feeling good is the basis of Nia, a blend of modern and ethnic dance, martial arts and yoga. Founded in 1983 by Debbie and Carlos Rosas as an activity to address the whole person and not just the body, Nia classes follow 52 steps, stances and stretches set to music. But despite the choreography, “it’s actually a blend of form and freedom,” says Roberta Mohler, a



Toronto-based Nia instructor. She likens Nia to a music score; there are set notes, but “it’s permissible to play the music with the style, attitude and rhythm that is appropriate for you that day.”

Because there’s no right or wrong way to move, Nia requires participants to really listen to their bodies. “[It’s about] tuning in to what they feel. Where do they feel it and does it feel good? [The idea is] to really just stay with the sensations,” says Mohler. This mind-body connection easily translates into the bedroom. Whether it’s on the stair-climber or between the sheets, “many of us feel the pressure to perform, to get from A to Z in a certain amount of time,” says Mohler. Nia teaches focusing instead on “oneself as a place where sensuality and pleasure begin.”

Get on Top

Ancient India’s manual to making love, the Kama Sutra, tells of 64 positions. Practicing the following three exercise positions at the gym will ensure you’re ready for pillow play.

“Your traditional push-up is excellent if you’re on top,” says Helen Vanderburg, former world champion synchronized swimmer and founder of Heavens Fitness in Calgary. Because of a lack of upper-body strength, “most women fatigue in less than a minute,” she says, which is short even for a quickie. Increase staying power (and tricep, bicep, chest and upper-back strength) by lowering and lifting your body while on your knees with your hands wider than shoulder-width apart.

Prefer to see stars – or fireworks – in the sky? Get a grip on traditional positions (and your partner) with the shoulder bridge, says Vanderburg. Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet and arms on the floor, then lift and hold your hips to strengthen your hamstrings, glutes, inner thighs and pelvic floor.

And because you never know when the mood will strike – shower for two, perhaps? – strong legs are key to spontaneity. Vanderburg suggests a wide-leg squat to build quad and inner-thigh muscles and to loosen tight hips. Stand with your feet wider than hip-width apart, toes turned out slightly, and sit back. For each exercise, do three sets of 20 reps (lowering for two counts and lifting for two counts).

Kegel Crunches

You know where your trapezoids and triceps are, but how about the pubococcygeus muscle? Also called the PC muscle, it is the butterfly-shaped muscle that forms the pelvic floor. A strong PC muscle can enhance sexual response and orgasm. “Just like any other muscle, if it’s flabby and not being utilized, it’s not going to be responsive,” says Vera Zyla, sex educator and co-owner of The Art of Loving in Vancouver.

Dr. Arnold Kegel first developed his PC toning technique in 1948 to help women with bladder-control issues. “And lo and behold, they reported improved ability in achieving orgasm,” says Zyla.

To perform Kegels, squeeze your PC muscle (as if stopping urine flow) for a second and release. Repeat 20 times, twice a day. Work up to holding for 5–10 seconds. “You can do them anywhere: sitting in your car at a red light or watching TV,” says Zyla. But don’t overdo it. “If you haven’t jogged in a long time, you could be sore

afterward. The same applies here.” Build strength slowly and relax between contractions.

Yoga Gyration

Yoga has long been heralded for generating Sting-like stamina. The flexibility to fold your body in half, on a mat or a mattress, is a definite bonus. And when Spinning met yoga, it got sexy, too.

Spynga is the creation of Sari Nisker (the yogi) and Casey Schacter (the cyclist), who have fused pedalling and prana to form the ultimate workout at their Toronto studio, also called Spynga. Warm-up includes yoga-esque poses on the bike, followed by 25 minutes of cycling, then 25 minutes of vinyasa yoga on the mat.

Physically, yoga poses such as the cobra, bow and shoulder stand send blood directly down under to the pelvic area, and the practice of ujjayi breath helps tone the sexual organs, says Nisker. Mentally, she says, “yoga teaches you to become present and aware. You learn to focus on your breath, to just be in the moment.”

(Translation for the bedroom: no more mentally composing Sunday’s to-do list during a Saturday-night romp.)

As for Spinning, it breeds confidence, “that can-do attitude,” says Schacter, and confidence is something that enhances everyone’s bedside manner. Plus, all that sweating sheds sex drive-dampening toxins, not to mention 500 calories (per 50-minute session), which can mean the difference between hiding out in granny panties and flaunting all you’ve got in a G-string. And since cardio, strength and flexibility are all taken care of in a one-hour class, you’ll have plenty of time to pursue other extracurricular activities, if you catch our drift.